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**The International Master in “Sustainable Biodiversity Management and Conservation”: A Training Option Contributing to Primate Conservation Programmes in Madagascar and the Comoros**

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Primates: Biodiversity and Conservation

## Oral Communications

### Stress and Play Fluctuation in Wild *Lemur catta*

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**Key Words:** Ring-tailed lemurs • Anxiety • Indicator • Scratching • Playful activity • Madagascar

Strepsirrhines have been neglected in the study of animal play. Yet, data from a wide array of primate taxa are needed to understand role, functions and social determinants of play. We investigated play behaviour in wild ring-tailed lemurs (*Lemur catta*) at the Berenty Reserve (Madagascar) where two other sympatric lemur species, and potential resource competitors, live (*Propithecus verreauxi* and *Eulemur fulvus*). We followed two groups of ring-tailed lemurs (9 and 16 individuals) from November 2006 to February 2007. We evaluated play fluctuation during possible stressful conditions, such as the presence of neighbour groups of conspecifics (C), and the presence of groups of other lemur species (NC). We considered the absence of any other group (A) as the control condition. We first verified whether the presence of other groups did increase stress levels in the study groups. Stress levels were measured via scratching, which previous studies have shown to be a reliable indicator of anxiety in human and non-human primates. Scratching rates in the study animals were higher in the presence of other groups (C+NC) compared to when other groups were absent (A). Overall play rates were highest when other groups were nearby. In presence of NC groups, play rates decreased as NC groups approached the study groups. Instead, when only C groups were in sight, play rates increased as the distance between the study groups and other conspecifics decreased. Moreover, play was highest during extra-group aggressive encounters (involving C groups) whereas it was suppressed during intra-group fights. Our results suggest that play fluctuates in response to different stressful conditions and may be used as a mechanism to cope with anxiety.

coloured objects significantly more than green ones. Even though some of the subjects showed a right hand preference in reaching for objects, no significant differences between right and left hand were found at a group level. In conclusion, the results of this study seem to support the plausibility of the foraging hypothesis. However, further studies are needed in order to make the picture of the evolution of human colour vision more accurate and complete.

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### **The International Master in 'Sustainable Biodiversity Management and Conservation': A Training Option Contributing to Primate Conservation Programmes in Madagascar and the Comoros**

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**Key Words:** Cooperation • Madagascar • Comoros • EDULINK-ACP-EU

One of the main problems in Madagascar and the Comoros is in the limited availability of training opportunities in the field of biodiversity management and conservation. The SCORE project focuses on improving academic and educational quality, and on strengthening endogenous processes of economic and social development (the project is funded by the EDULINK-ACP-EU Cooperation Programme in Higher Education 9th EDF, under grant agreement no. ACP RPR 118 # 36). To reach these objectives, a 2 years master course in 'Sustainable Biodiversity Management and Conservation' was implemented, in line with current European guidelines, by the Faculté des Sciences et Technique de l'Université des Comores together with the University of Mahajanga (Madagascar), working in collaboration with ENS of Antananarivo (Madagascar) and the University of Torino (Italy). The number of student was limited to 28, out of 68 applications. Teaching activities comprised lessons and practicals held in Moroni and Mahajanga, and field work. A laboratory of microscopy and information technology was installed, and a 3-month period in a public or private institution in the field of nature conservation was organised. We consider this traineeship an added value of the master's degree. Students will have the opportunity of working with professionals, will gain expertise in the field of biological conservation and will produce a final dissertation. The subjects of the master's project include animal and plant diversity, in both marine and terrestrial habitats. Six students will focus on one rare endemic primate species belonging to the genus *Eulemur*, *Microcebus* or *Avahi*. The work experience periods are also expected to reinforce connections between academic and other, non-academic, institutions.

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### **How Captivity Could Influence the Behaviour of Grey Mouse Lemurs**

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**Key Words:** Grey mouse lemur • *Microcebus murinus* • Captivity • Behaviours

The grey mouse lemur is generally described as a solitary species due to the fact that individuals are usually observed in the wild foraging and travelling alone. However, reports from the wild also indicate that females often sleep together in nests, whereas males sleep